Notes on Consecrated Life

The Origin of Consecrated life

I will espouse you to me forever: I will espouse you in right and in justice, in love and in mercy; I will espouse you in fidelity, and you shall know the LORD. - Hosea 2:16.21-22

An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. … so that he may be holy in both body and spirit. I am telling you this for your own benefit, not to impose a restraint upon you, but for the sake of propriety and adherence to the Lord without distraction.

- 1 Cor 7:32-35

The life of Christ is the inspiration and model of consecrated life: “If you wish to be perfect, go and sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven. Then come  
 follow Me.” - Mt 19:21

* After Christ’s death and the age of martyrdom had passed, men and women still wished to follow Christ radically, forsaking all for His sake.
* Some withdrew to the desert, living in solitude and deep prayer. (Eremetical life - alone)
* Others came together to live in community. (Cenobitical life - communal)

The Purpose of Consecrated Life

***The Divine Office…***

* is a collection of psalms, New and Old Testament readings, intercessions, & antiphons.
* dates back to Jewish customs of praying the psalms in the temple.
* is prayed year long, at regular increments throughout each day. (Cloistered religious pray **major** and minor hours; active religious pray major.) The three major hours are
  + **Lauds** - morning
  + **Vespers** - evening
  + **Compline** - night
* exists in order to sanctify the day – to incline the heart to turn to God at every moment.
* To imitate and embrace the poor, chaste, and obedient Christ.
* To witness to the world the absolute primacy of God; to be a sign of the life that all will live in heaven.

The Essential Elements of Consecrated Life

* Above all, religious must be holy! They are called not to DO something, but to BE something.
* Regularity of prayer (e.g., the Divine Office and private prayer). This is the most important part of religious life.
* Separation from the world:   
  Total (cloistered = enclosed) or partial
* Common apostolate : a gift of service to the Church, such as teaching, nursing, counseling, care for the poor, making altar breads or vestments, and prayer.
* Total dedication to God through vowing oneself to the observance of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. A vow is a free and deliberate promise made to God concerning a possible and better good (*Code of Canon Law* 1191).
* The evangelical counsels (poverty, chastity, & obedience) are
  + recommendations (NOT commands)
  + about how to live the gospel (evangelical = gospel)
  + modeled & given by Christ
  + Proposed by Christ to all Christians to help them grow in charity; religious profess them as vows in a permanent state of life (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #915).